Paper-writing checklist

Note: this is meant to cover many possible things you might do; for any paper you won’t need to do all of these tasks. The list is also unordered.

☐ Identify your audience
☐ Define your purpose
☐ Write a top-down outline down to bullet points
☐ Write a TODO list for each section
☐ Come up with a 30-second elevator pitch (How would you respond if someone asks, “What’s your paper about?”)
☐ Start with the paper section that is easiest for you to write
☐ Make hand-drawn figures for the introduction
☐ Make hand-drawn figures explaining your solution
☐ Make hand-drawn results figures
☐ Dump your thoughts into a text file or onto a piece of paper
☐ Decide what figures will show the results
☐ Outline the sections
☐ Write down a list of contributions
☐ Decide what is novel compared to related work
☐ Start writing the technical description (what did you do?)
☐ Explain background you need (or think you need)
☐ Come up with a main message
☐ Gather statistics on the implementation (lines of code, versions of software used, etc.)
☐ Identify a motivating “selling” result (we improve throughput by 5x, reduce cost by 20%, etc.)

☐ Come up with a simple running example that you can use to explain your techniques (eg, if you developed a programming language, a specific program is useful)
☐ Find statistics that motivate the problem (eg, “5.7 Million people in the US have Alzheimer’s Disease”)
☐ Write the related work for direct competition
☐ Identify a good concrete example to show in the intro (eg, if you generate fake faces, you should show some on the first page)
☐ Identify what evidence you have for each motivation/problem you might claim to solve (especially helpful for deciding between motivations)
☐ Write down the questions your results/evaluation will answer
☐ Enumerate the experiments you have run and what conclusions you can draw from each
☐ Enumerate the claims you make and what evidence you need for them
☐ Write an introduction
☐ Write the methods section
☐ …
☐ …
☐ …

Things you should do at some point but probably later:
☐ Write an abstract
☐ Choose a title
☐ Write a conclusion
☐ Figure out all the actual submission logistics (formatting, PC conflicts, etc.)
☐ Trim the paper to be within the page limit

Developed by Mazdak Abulnaga and Tej Chajed, 2021